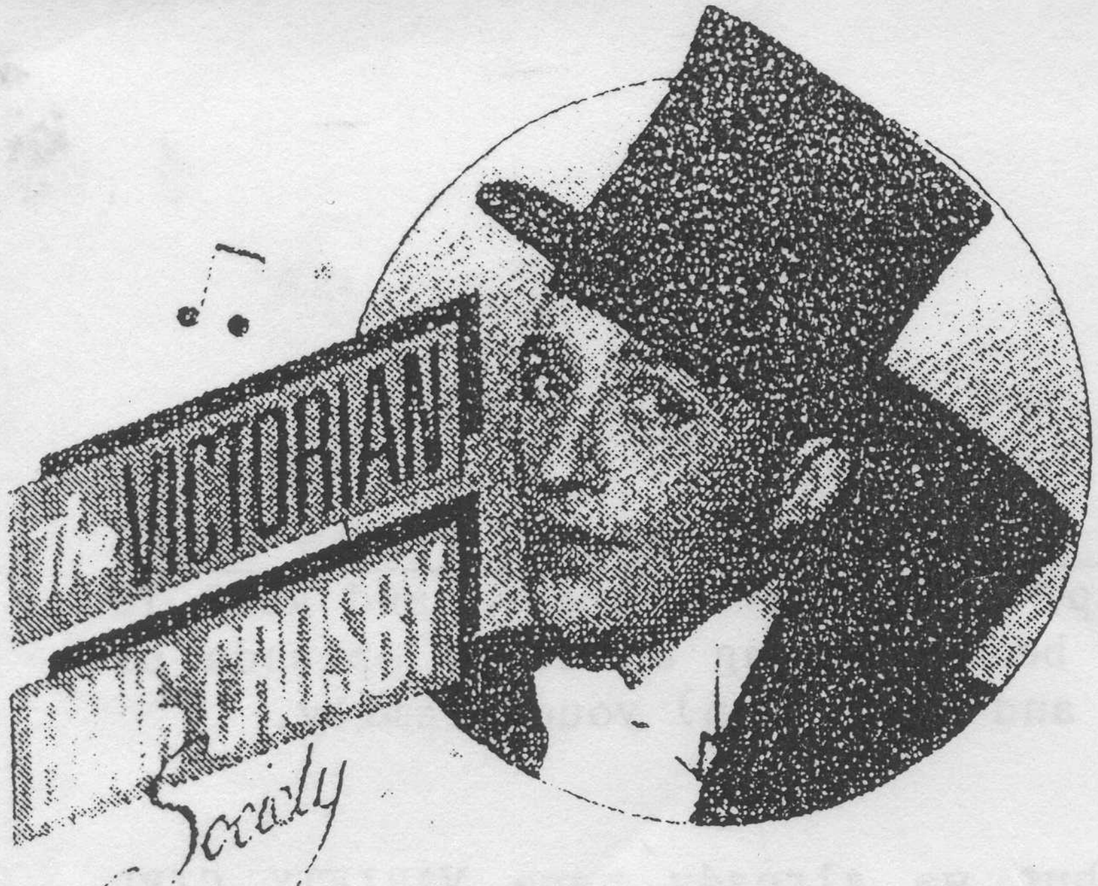

NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 1992

Hello again.
I was glad to hear that many (well, a few) of you (two or three, then) were pleased to hear from (anyone?) from yours truly in the last newsletter. As this issue gives me the luxury of two full pages to fill, I can be a little more expansive than last time. By tradition, our communications have always lead off with future functions, so why start changing now?

TUESDAY OCTOBER 13TH - 'IF I HAD MY WAY' + SUPPORTING SHORTS

A reminder that our October feature is IF I HAD MY WAY which Bing made for Universal in early 1940. His co-star was Gloria Jean and as well as the title number, Bing's songs include MEET THE SUN HALF WAY and APRIL PLAYED THE FIDDLE.

As support, we are screening:
* A mid-1950s PHIL SILVERS SHOW with Bing as guest
* A rare late 1920s short featuring two songs from Ruth Etting. Miss Etting sings sweetly to the camera which, locked in its primitive, airtight and soundproof booth, can't move, cut to a close-up or even cut.
* Bing singing I WISHED ON THE MOON from THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1936
* An extract from a TV special starring Perry Como, made about 5 years ago in which Perry presents a tribute to Bing. (Unfortunately, my copy is minus the last minute or two but the rest is so enjoyable and even moving, that we think you'll want to see it. But don't say we didn't warn you!)
* An episode of Bing's mid-60s weekly sitcom series
* Some home video footage shot by yours truly in December of 1990 at the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters museum in L.A. in which member Russ Rullman shows us around. I apologise for the sound, camera work and editing but as the museum is situated in the basement of the old NBC studios where Bing once broadcast the Kraft Music Hall, I thought that it may have some historical interest for members. Of particular importance to Crosby buffs is their collection of short discs which the show's resident comedian, Bob Burns, arranged to have cut directly off air by a small recording company in Los Angeles from 1936 - 41. These records were intended to preserve Burns' monologues for his own reference, but as the company let the recording equipment run until the acetate was filled, they also preserved a number of hitherto unavailable Crosby vocals.

Russ Rullman is prepared to swap tapes of these discs for equally rare Crosby radio material - specifically: Cremo shows, early 30s Chesterfield, Woodbury, KMH, AFRS transcriptions and some 1954+ shows with Buddy Cole. His address is 2244 Calle Bellota, Carnarillo, CA, USA 93010. Good luck!

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1ST - 'ROAD TO UTOPIA' + THE HOLLYWOOD PALACE - XMAS 1968

Bing and Bob's 'Road' series have held up well over the years and ROAD TO UTOPIA was one of the best. We'll also be screening an early episode of HOLLYWOOD PALACE in colour featuring Bing and his (then) young family.

NEXT YEAR

The dates have still to be confirmed, but we already have VARIETY GIRL (which we've never shown) which features Bing and Bob Hope several times as well as almost every star on the Paramount lot. We'd also like to show OUT OF THIS WORLD which features Bing's voice coming out of Eddie Bracken's mouth, if I can track down a copy. Can you help? One night we'll also run the video THE MAGIC OF BING CROSBY, mentioned in our last newsletter and a tape of the musical highlights from Eddie Cantor's early movies.

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Derek Parkes reports that there have been over 150 full Crosby CDs issued to date and at least a similar number of discs in which Bing is featured on at least one track. The problem is that many are produced by small local companies using out of copyright material and they are often duplicating the same material over and over again.

For example, in the Letters section of the latest BING magazine from the International Crosby Circle, a U.S. record producer writes that he is bringing out a CD with still further improved versions of 'Dinah', 'Dream Walking', etc next year. Is he serious? While today's computerised digital technology can clean up old tracks better than ever, we're now getting into subtleties that only stand out in a recording studio.

Equally annoying is the fact that some companies mix Bing's Whiteman era with his work of later decades. To my ear, in retrospect, there are really 'four ages' of Crosby and the styles don't sit comfortably together:

1. 'Pre-Bing' Bing (1926 - 1930)
2. 'Crooner Crosby' (1931 - 1935)
3. 'Good Old Bing' (1936 - 1965)
4. 'Old Bing' (1966 - 1977)

Bing's voice changes so much over the four periods (to say nothing of the orchestral backing) that to the untrained ear, he can sound like a totally different singer. I don't know how the casual purchaser would respond.

That leads me to a question which I've often asked before - WHO is buying Crosby records these days? How many younger members of the general public would spontaneously buy a Crosby CD?! As for the members of the various Crosby clubs around the world, surely they have a limited interest (and money) for buying the same material over and over again. Especially when you get into the 'Greatest Successes' area, how big is the market for the same old stuff? Someone must be buying but WHO?

Tracks that I'd like to see re-issued

For some reason, there a handful of very fine Crosby vocals that are rarely

re-issued from his Decca period. Namely: October 5, 1934 - The Moon Was Yellow, October 5, 1934 - Two Cigarettes In The Dark, November 12, 1935 - On Treasure Island, November 12, 1935 - Adeste Fidelis, November 12, 1935 - Silent Night, March 24, 1936 - We'll Rest At The End Of The Trail, March 22, 1939 - God Bless America, March 22, 1939 - The Star Spangled Banner, July 14, 1941 - Darling Je Vous Aime Beaucoup, June 17, 1952 - You Don't Know What Lonesome Is, April 30, 1954 - If You Love Me.

I guess that the 1935 Adeste Fidelis/Silent Night tracks have never been touched because the later versions sell so well, but to a collector, they are far better examples of the Crosby voice in action. The track that surprises me because it never even gets a mention is 'You Don't Know What Lonesome Is' from 1952. Bing's delivery is just right and the arrangement consisting of a single acoustic guitar and vocal group gives the track a wistful, haunting quality. Although it was re-issued in the 1950s, to the best of my knowledge, it has not surfaced since. A pity.

A double LP set that could stand re-issuing on CD is HOW THE WEST WAS WON. Apart from turning up in Japan a few years ago, this has not been sighted for decades. RCA lavished money on the production and Bing is obviously giving it his all, but I guess that the record-buying public wasn't interested as the recording has sunk into oblivion. Again, a pity.

Meanwhile, back at the New Releases...

BING CROSBY 1926 - 1932, TIMELESS RECORDS CBC 1-004

I seem to have side-tracked myself somewhere back there. One new CD available around town for $25 is an import from Holland which features Bing's first take of 'Pretty Lips' from December 22, 1926 which has never been issued before. (The familiar version was recorded on February 28, 1927.) The other 23 tracks cover material from 1927 to 1932, and although less common takes have been used where possible, it has all been re-issued before and in recent years too.

IT'S A GOOD DAY - PEGGY LEE & BING - PARROT PARCD 001

This CD from the UK features 36 tracks from Philco shows and features solos from Peggy, duets with Peggy and Bing and some dialogue. Sound quality is excellent and you get 78 minutes for your money. Highly recommended.

KEN BARNES' TRACKS RE-ISSUED

This month marks the fifteenth anniversary of Bing's passing already! On the tenth anniversary, British record producer Ken Barnes produced a three CD set of Bing's Buddy Cole material with a modern orchestral backing. This was never issued in Australia and many members missed out. However, the tracks do keep turning up on single CDs, and one such recent UK issue is called A GOLDEN HOUR OF BING CROSBY (KNIGHT RECORDS KSHCD 170). I've also seen other issues here in Melbourne pressed in Europe. It's worth checking the record shops these days. It's surprising what you can find.

Of course, the ever-reliable Derek Parkes is happy to help with any issues released overseas, and as he has an Australian bank account, paying is as simple as making a deposit at your local branch. Write for details:
66 Firs Rd, Firsdown, Salisbury, Wilts SP5 1SW, UK.

ALSO FROM THE UK ARE

THE MOVIE HITS (FLAPPER PAST CD9784) and SING A SONG OF SUNBEAMS (SAVILLE CDSVL219), both of which contain Bing's late 30s recordings. There is some duplication of titles, but enough different material to warrant serious consideration of adding these two to your collection. If only these small companies would talk to each other!

IF YOU LIKE BING'S SINGALONG LPs

Good value is a local issue CROSBY CLASSICS VOL II (REGAL 11572042) which contains three sides from the double-LP set 101 GANG SONGS. It's less than $10 in most shops. (No, I haven't seen a Volume 1.)

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* A 'must have' new book on Bing's records being published in the UK in four separate volumes is Fred Reynolds THE CROSBY COLLECTION 1926 - 1977. In it, distinguished British collector Fred Reynolds critically analyses every one of Bing's commercial recordings. Volume 1 (1926 - 1934) is available now and Volume 2 will be out by December. For details, write to John Joyce, Ravenswood House, Chowdene Bank, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6JP. Please enclose a couple of international reply coupons to cover mail costs. John also has a 1993 Crosby Calendar for sale.

* The stage production of HIGH SOCIETY features in the Melbourne Theatre Company's 1992/93 season as their Christmas attraction. I wonder who they will get to play Bing's role?

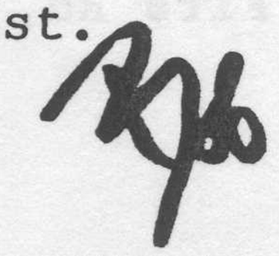
* On the Movie Show on SBS recently, David Stratton announced that director Robert Altman is currently working on a "re-make of the 1948 movie A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court". I find that a little hard to believe. Altman could very well be working on a new film adaptation of Mark Twain's famous book, but re-filming Bing's movie, no.

* Members will recall that one of the highlights of THE CROSBY VOICE was the series of intelligent, well researched and well written articles by Vern Taylor, our Honorary Vice President. We are sad to have to report that Vern's beloved wife Molly died earlier this year and we offer him our heartfelt condolences.

Can Anyone Help?

Members who are unable to shut out horrible memories of the past may recall that one of the final nails in the coffin of the late, lamented 3DB was a nostalgia show I presented on Sunday evenings for a few months. Now I know that people sometimes tape such shows to filter out records that interest them. My question is, if you taped any editions of 'Thanks For The Memory' and have not recorded over them yet, could I please borrow your tapes to make copies. If so, could you drop me a note. My address is 24 Alston Grove, East St Kilda 3183.

I guess we'll leave it there. Until next time, all the best.



NB - ALL MEMBERS ---COMMITTEE REPORT

The matter of money - or lack of it - is on all minds at the moment --- including those of the Committee who, reluctantly,must now raise it, if the Society is to survive.

We have, for the past year or so, suspended membership fees and used existing funds to cover expenses. However the time of reckoning has arrived and the recommendation now is that is that an annual membership fee be re-introduced - set at $8 per single or family member.

From a Victorian membership of 75, attendance at film nights averages 30-40, and the funds that would be generated by the absent 50% are sorely missed, especially with the cost of the theatrette so high - while the production and distribution of each newsletter, with stationery, typing, printing, postage etc., costs almost $1.00 per member, for each issue.

It would be appreciated if you would register your reaction to the membership fee proposal in the space provided below, and either bring it to the October 13th get-together, or post it to Mr. Keith Dorman, 32 Raleigh Street, Blackburn, 3130.

For those who for whatever reason can't attend the film nights, the newsletter (a) keeps you in touch with the Club; and (b) provides a fund of information on Videos, CD's, LP'S, Tapes etc., gleaned from Bob's network of world-wide contacts. However, if you wish, you could indicate that you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, in which case the membership fee would be waived.

If no reply is received within a reasonable period, it will be assumed that this is the course you wish to follow.

Dear Keith,

Thank you for the current issue of the club's newsletter, and in answer to the note regarding membership fees.

(i) Please continue to send me the newsletter. Enclosed is my $8 membership fee to assist in the continuation of the Club.

(ii) Please be advised that I am unable to attend the club's film nights, but would like to continue to receive the newsletter, and enclose my membership fee of $8.00;

(iii) you may delete my name from the mailing list.

Please print your name:.....